

Raising Havoc

by Raising Havoc

Category: Fullmetal Alchemist
Genre: Family, Romance
Language: English
Characters: Jean H., Rebecca C.
Pairings: Jean H./Rebecca C.
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2016-04-13 06:54:28
Updated: 2016-04-13 06:54:28
Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:51:21
Rating: K+
Chapters: 8
Words: 7,630
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: A series of one shots/drabbles dedicated to exploring parenthood with a lesser known couple. [Havoc/Catalina]

1. Mr Mom

****Mr. Mom****

"Aww, come on, Bex, I was just teasing you." Jean rolled behind his wife, noting her angry posture, her quiet facade, and the way her hip was poking off to one side. She was being sassy and he hated that. Usually when she got like this, he pissed her off royally. "Hey, I won't smoke around the baby, does that make the situation better? I'll go outside or something."

"You were supposed to go outside from the start!" She sighed and pushed a hand through her hair. "Jean, I swear, some days I don't know how you lived this long."

He gave her his usual smirk. "Dumb luck and a deal with the devil? Come on, I can watch my daughter. It'll be fine. You go to your meeting and Vanessa will be fine, I promise. I wouldn't _actually_ give the baby a cigarette, I was just playing." He folded his arms across the arms of his chair, shaking his head. "If you really don't trust me, take her with you. But I'm a little upset that my _own_ wife _doesn't_ trust me enough to watch my _own_ daughter_. I mean, she's a baby, what's the worst she can do?"

"You really think my job is that easy?" Becky huffed, folding her arms and poking her hip out to the other side. She was starting to get that Latina fire he found so sexy, but not in this case. This was pure rage. "Let's see how well you do babysitting her for the day. You tell me how easy it is when I get home tomorrow."

"Woah, really? A whole day of uninterrupted time with Vanessa? This

is a first. You've never let me have that much time with her alone." Mostly because she was afraid of exactly what they had discussed moments prior. That and she was obviously jealous that the baby loved him more. "Deal. We'll call you tonight and let you know how it goes."

Grabbing her uniform jacket off of the chair at the kitchen table, she smirked over at her husband. "Right, Jean. We'll see. I will tell you this much â€" she lives up to her name."

"I bet she does." He smirked and watched as his wife left, suddenly realizing in that moment that he had been paying no attention to the baby and didn't even know where she'd wandered off to. "Nessa?"

Somewhere off in the annals of the house, he heard a sharp _adda_, which prompted him to wander in that direction. Sitting on her butt in the middle of the hall was the dark haired blue eyed wonder, thumb stuck in her mouth for good measure to complete the innocent look. He smiled a bit and hoisted the infant into his arms. She was well over the age of _infancy_, but for some reason he always saw her as a baby. Despite her being two and already toddling along â€" at a quicker rate than he was â€" he still called her his baby. "Adda!"

He nuzzled his scratchy beard against her cheek and smiled, holding her against his shoulder. "Come on, Kiddo. I bet you want to go outside. Mama says you like to play with the pup." He whistled for the dog to follow, the large beast scampering down the hall and skidding to a halt next to him. Becky had trained it since infancy to recognize any changes in his behavior, so in a way it was a support animal for him and the baby. "Go, Fang."

The pup barked and ran off through the doggy door in the kitchen and waited impatiently outside. "Should I make you lunch first, Nessa? Mama said you might be hungry."

She held up her tiny hands and opened and closed her chubby palms. "Nutter belly!"

"Yes, yes," He chuckled softly and kissed her hair. "I'll make you a nutter belly sandwich."

Vanessa laughed as he brought her into the kitchen. He couldn't help it; that sound was music to his ears. It was the best thing he had ever heard and he loved making her laugh every chance he got. Keeping the toddler balanced precariously in his lap, he moved to the counter to get everything down. It was moments like this he was glad that Becky lived in a one-floor house. A few modifications made it home for him. He could stand now, but walking was still an issue. Grabbing the bread and incidentals to make the sandwich, he set them on the counter and looked to his daughter. "How do you like your nutter belly sandwich? More nutter than belly?"

"Lots of nutter!" She giggled and put her hands onto the counter, watching him. "Nutter nutter nutter!"

"Yes, all the nutter," He laughed opening up the jar for her. He'd learned quickly to use spoons around her, ever since the one time she got hold of a knife while they were cooking, he'd been terrified ever

since. "You like a lot of nutter, so tell me when to put on the belly."

She tapped her index finger to her lip and watched while he methodically made the sandwich, then tapped his hand. "Adda, no belly."

Jean gave a shocked gasp as he looked down to his daughter. "No belly? Blasphemy! That's your mother's work. How can someone have a nutter belly sandwich without the belly?" He kissed her head and folded the slice of bread, handing it down to her. "There you go. One nutter sandwich for the biggest nut of them all."

"Adda, play." She muttered, taking a bite of the sandwich. She was pointing out the window at the dog.

He frowned at her, kissing her head. "After I clean up, princess." He set her on the floor and sighed. He hated letting her go. "It'll be a few minutes, you wait here."

For a while, the child listened. She tapped on the floor, banged on the doors of the cabinets, and even tried to pick up a spider with her fingers. But then she grew bored. And what do children do when they get bored? They look for adventure. She rolled onto her belly and started to crawl through the doggy door outside.

Focused on the task at hand, he didn't even notice that Vanessa was gone until he heard Fang barking up a storm. The dog was trained to protect him, and by extension, protect her. He turned when he noticed she wasn't in the kitchen anymore, his heart racing a million miles an hour. It was only a few seconds! Unlocking the wheels, he looked around, calling her name, when he caught a glimpse of her outside. "Vanessa?" Little else registered in his mind except for the fact that his precious baby girl was getting into trouble.

He raced over to the door and looked out at her. She'd already started down the sidewalk towards the street, but Fang was doing his best to keep her in place. He was running circles around the child, hoping to slow her down or stop her, but she wasn't listening.

For a while, Jean sat there, the sniper in him taking in the surroundings. Vanessa was in trouble and he kicked himself into a different gear. Locking the wheels on his chair, he raced down the driveway to quickly grab her from going into traffic, pulling her back and holding her so tight he thought he'd suffocate her. His heart was pounding in his ears, the fear evident in his trembling voice. "Vanessa Anne Havoc! Don't you ever scare Adda like that again, do you hear me?"

The child looked up at him with wide blue eyes, an awestruck wonder on her features. At first he thought she was going to cry, but she laughed wildly and pointed behind him. "Adda, did it!"

Jean looked up for a moment, his azure eyes confused by her words. What in the—"when he turned to where she was pointing, he noticed it. He'd run a good 200 feet to grab her from going into traffic. And that was the motivator he needed. Maybe he could walk again, with the right triggers. Nuzzling her hair again, he softly kissed her head. "Vanessa, please don't ever do that to daddy again. I mean it. You scared me. I thought I was going to lose you."

Vanessa placed her chubby hands on his cheeks and kissed his nose.
"Adda walked."

"Adda ran," He corrected, taking her hands in his and lowering them from his face. "I mean it, Vanessa. Never again."

The toddler nodded and looked up at him, this time her eyes wide with sadness. "Adda mad?"

"Adda is very mad. You could have gotten seriously injured. You couldâ€" He was quiet for a moment, swallowing down the painful emotions that followed with the train wreck of possibilities. "You could have ended up like me."

"Adda." She climbed out of his lap and moved next to him, holding out her hands, palms down. Her feet were planted firm. It took him a moment to realize that it was Becky's stance. That's how she would help him up. "Come on, sugar!"

"Sugar?" Had Becky _ever _called him that? Then it dawned on him that she was saying _soldier_, which was an expression Becky used fairly frequently. "Yes Ma'am." He climbed to his feet rather unsteadily, using the guard rail to help himself back to his chair. He unlocked the wheels and moved back to where Nessa was sitting on the sidewalk. "Vanessa, daddy loves you."

"Adda me?"

"Yeah, you." He smiled a little and brought her up into his lap again, holding her close to his pounding chest. Just knowing she was okay was the comfort he needed.

When Becky came home that night there were crayon marks all over the walls, peanut butter and jelly smeared on the cabinets, blocks balanced precariously on the other side of the door, and her husband sleeping in the middle of the large living room with his daughter under his arm protectively. She moved to retrieve the toddler, taking her to her bedroom. Then she came back and sat down on the floor, poking her husband's nose. "So how did it go?"

"I ran today."

She smiled. "I told you she would keep you on your toes."

He shook his head and sat up, tugging his wife down into his lap for a kiss. "No, Becky. I _ran _today. I chased after her, like you told me to. For the first time in three and a half years â€" I ran. And it felt good."

"I'm so proud of you." Becky kissed his lips as a reward, laying her head against his shoulder. "I'm assuming that meant she did to you what she did to me."

"What did she do to you?" Jean asked hesitantly.

Becky laughed and closed her eyes a moment. "She tried to go for a swim in the bathtub alone. I told you, she lives up to her name."

"No kidding," He rubbed the back of his neck. "Remember when you joked about how you could teach us to both walk at the same time? I know it sounds weird, but I think she did that for you. It's like she knew that's what you were trying to do all those times. Becky, call me crazy, but Vanessa was proud of me when I was done, and she tried to help me up using your motivators."

"You're crazy and delusional. Let's get you to bed before your medication affects the rest of your functionality." She stood up, planted her feet, bent her body, and held out her hands to help him. "Come on, Soldier."

He couldn't help but snicker. Like mother like daughter.

2. Night Terrors

****Night Terrors****

"Adda!"

"You just put her to bed," Jean complained, nuzzling his head into his wife's shoulder. He sighed softly, trying to think of all the reasons why his daughter would be screaming his name. The last time it was because she thought she lost her blanket, but it was under her the whole time. The second time was because she was thirsty, and she had a glass of water already. He pinched the bridge of his nose and rolled onto his back. "You want me to get this one?"

"Adda!"

This time there was a shriek to her voice that Becky took note of. She sat up rather quickly and brushed her hair behind her ears. She'd spent more time with the child, so she knew her fears. "I got this one."

He couldn't help but notice how wide awake his wife looked. It must have been the time at war, because he never saw her jump out of bed so quickly. She was already off and down the hall before he could protest, sitting on the edge of the bed with his arms folded, a huff escaping his lips. He could barely make out what they were saying through the paper thin walls.

"No, princess, daddy has to sleep, he has appointments in the morning. Mommy can help you, what do you need?"
>

"Adda."
>

He snickered sarcastically from his spot on the bed. This was a nightly thing. He'd be busy, she'd want him, Becky would have to track him down. Every single night. Clearly Vanessa was a daddy's girl, but Becky refused to admit that her own daughter loved him more than she did. Before his wife could utter a curse word "as she usually would at inappropriate times" he slipped into his chair and wandered down the hall to his daughter's room.

"Adda!"

"Yeah," He replied tiredly, waiting in the doorway. "What do you need, Nessa?" Removing her thumb from her mouth, she poked it over towards the door in the back corner. He noticed that it was slightly ajar and emitting a light from outside. He sighed and went over to his daughter, running a hand over her head. "It's okay, Nessa. I'll go check for monsters."

Becky barely noticed how swift he was when he stood up from the chair and held onto the wall. Part of her remembered that expression, the stoic one, as if he was fighting off the world. She hadn't seen it in years, but he still remained ever vigilant, checking each crevice and spot where a monster could feasibly fit. She smiled a bit, watching him shift into full soldier, before he thumped back down, closed the door, and went back over to the two of them. "Anything?"

"I'm happy to report there are no monsters," He responded running a hand through his hair. "Nessa, I get the feeling that's still not enough."

The little girl whimpered and took her thumb out of her mouth, poking it down.

Under the bed? He hadn't thought of that one. It should have crossed his mind considering where Lust was hiding when she made him like this. He grumbled and dropped down onto his stomach, peering into the darkness. "I can't see down here."

Becky offered to turn on the light, prompting Vanessa to scream. "No! They hide!"

Offering her pen light from her pocket to him, he went back to work. Shifting objects and rolling things to the side, he couldn't help but comment on the messy bomb that seemed to have detonated under her bed. He'd worry about her cleaning her room later. For now, he was worried about monsters and he didn't see any. Wiggling back out from under the bed, he handed Becky her light back. "All clear."

Somehow, the idea still didn't satisfy the child's determination that there was a monster in her room. He couldn't help it; he understood all too clearly how she felt. Even he got scared in the dark sometimes. It was easy to do. She pushed out her lower lip and started whimpering.

"No, Nessa, no. Don't do that." He reached out his arms for Becky to help him up into his chair. Once that was done, he tugged his daughter into his lap. "Nessa, come on, don't cry. Please don't do that. You know I hate it when you do that."

Becky held up her hand to say something and then lowered it quickly, digging through one of her daughter's drawers for an object. It was a small hair tie with bells on it. She wrapped it a few times around the handle of the door and looked over at Jean. He seemed perplexed by what she was doing so she demonstrated. "If there's anything in here," She opened the door to ring the bells. "It will definitely make noise."

"Good idea, Becky! See, that's why you're the thinker of the group." He rested his chin on Vanessa's head and watched his wife move methodically through the room, searching for anywhere else a monster

could hide. "What about under the bed?"

"I was getting to that." This time she left the room and retrieved a spray bottle of water, handing it to him. He twisted it in his hand to read the words Monster Be Gone on the side of it. "Now if anything shows up and scares her, she can use that. It'll get rid of anything. I used to use it as a kid."

He grinned that usual dopey grin and looked down at Vanessa, explaining how it works. "If you see a monster, just grab this and spray it, and poof! Monsters are terrified of this stuff, it's like acid to them."

"Ama!" She held out her tiny hands and groped the air. Becky complied and took the child up into her arms. "Ama chu."

"You're welcome, princess. Daddy's scared of the dark, too, so we have to be extra careful sometimes." Becky didn't address his pathetic whimper; he sounded like he was kicked in the shin. "But if you want to know a secret, daddy's the bravest of all of us. He's actually tussled with the monsters in the dark."

"No! They die?" Vanessa inquired, looking to her father with wide eyes.

He nodded, looking to his wife, glad she didn't get into details. "They did. It used to be my job, to fight off the monsters. Every night I'd check. Now you can sleep sound, okay? If you ever get scared of the monsters, you call me. I'll be here as quick as I can."

"Chu!"

"You're welcome, Nessa. Now will you go to sleep?" He loved his daughter, but he was quite tired from being startled awake. "Please? For daddy? I'll show you how to hunt them in the morning."

"Deal!" Nessa wiggled from her mother's arms, wandering over to her father and tapping his knee. When he bent down to ask what she needed, she kissed his cheek. "Chu Adda."

He gave a half grin as she climbed back into bed. "Goodnight, Nessa."

Back in their bedroom, nestled back where he belonged, he kissed his wife's neck gently. "You just had to tell her."

Becky reached out a hand to lay against his shoulder, smiling a bit to herself. "She needs to understand that even the bravest people in the world have weaknesses. She sees you as this big, tough, macho guy, and she needs to know that you have your weaknesses, too. The sooner she understands that, the quicker she can realize that it's okay to be afraid of the dark." She turned in his arms, kissing his cheek. "And besides, you're the hero of this story, not me. Why are you complaining?"

"Iâ€"kind of hoped I wouldn't have to tell her how I ended up like this."

She sighed and touched a hand to his cheek, kissing his lips.

"Jeanâ€¦you're a hero."

"Then why don't I feel like one? I can barely even do half the things she wants her to do. She asked me to dance the other night."

Becky smiled and kissed him again. "You'll get there. We'll work on it. I promise. But she sees you as nothing but normal. She's never known you any other way, so to her â€" this is her daddy. He might be a little special, but he's hers and she loves him. That's the thing about kids. Their affection is unconditional."

He wrapped his arms tighter around her body and closed his eyes, resting his chin against her head. "God, how did I ever get so lucky to find you."

Using his own expression against him, she closed her eyes. "Dumb luck and a deal with the devil."

"Ain't that the truth."

****Idea used with permission from Majin Videl.****

3. Broken

****Broken****

Vanessa was sitting on the front porch blowing bubbles, watching as Fang tried to catch them in his teeth. The dog was normally calm and quiet, but sometimes he was still a puppy. She would stop every so often, dip the wand into the solution, and pull it back out to make sloppy bubbles. Becky had made the soap for her by hand, insisting that her way was the better way, since she grew up making them. She was toddling along, blowing bubbles as she moved. Sometimes, Becky felt that she walked better backwards than she did forwards.

The dog was running in circles around her, protectively trying to catch her in case if she fell. Though Becky had a keen eye on her, she knew her daughter well enough to know that the dog wouldn't stop her. The little girl was still blowing bubbles, twirling around on the grass, when she tripped and fell head first into the sidewalk.

In an instant, Becky was on her feet, running towards her daughter. That same instant, she heard Ama over and over again followed by a sharp shriek. "Vanessa!" She scooped the child up into her arms, checking for marks or bruises. Her hands were careful as she scanned her daughter's bare legs. A scrape on her knee, but so far nothing monumental. She then gingerly moved her hair to the side and checked her head. Nothing there. "You're okay, Nessa."

Jean appeared on the porch, looking out at the sound of Vanessa crying, hands resting in his lap, though fidgeting since he couldn't do anything about her crying. "Is she okay?"

"Yeah, nothing's broken. Thankfully she has a hard head, like her daddy." Becky shot a grin over at her husband and rocked her daughter gently. "Nessa, it's okay, honey. You're fine."

He'd grown used to her falling and taking tumbles. She should have

been a gymnast with all the times she tripped on her shoes. But Becky assured him that it was normal for kids to fall. It was especially normal for toddlers to tumble; it was all part of learning how to walk. The same applied to him, and he smiled a bit at the fondness of it all. "Vanessa, do you hurt?"

"Broke, Adda."

He paused, looking to Becky. "Broke? What's broken?"

Becky checked her daughter over again, her body blocking his view. She froze, her body rigid. "Jean."

Was that a waver in her voice? Was Becky on the verge of tears? He blinked again, rolling down the porch to her. "What's wrong?"

"Smile for daddy," Becky demanded, looking to the small child.

Vanessa gave a wide, toothy grin. Except something was missing. One of her teeth. "Broke."

"No, princess, it's not broken." Becky laughed gently, patting her head. "Your teeth are meant to fall out. They'll be replaced by big, strong, adult teeth. Like Ama and Adda. See?" She smiled to demonstrate her point. "You're not broken." Squeezing her gently, she turned to see her husband fighting back tears. "You're growing up way too fast, but you sure aren't broken. You're perfect."

4. Butterfly

****Butterfly****

"So I was thinking of the name Kyle if it's a boy, and Carla if it's a girl," Kain muttered over his second glass of beer. The gang had reunited for a night, to celebrate the fact that Kain was having his first child. No one had done that for anyone else, but since Kain was the last of the group to marry, it was kind of a big deal to him. "I think it's fitting, you know?" Kain immediately turned to Jean. "So since you're the only one here with a kid, how did you come up with your daughter's name? Was it luck of the draw? Random naming conventions?"

He was quiet for a long moment. His posture shifted a bit, leaning back in the bench, one arm draped over the back precariously, his feet crossed. His hand rested against his glass, tapping against it with his wedding ring. In his mind, he was thinking back to when Rebecca first told him, that moment of elation and fear that hit him. He didn't even think of names then. "Rebecca suggested Calvin. I liked it for a boy, but then I asked her if it was a girl. I remember that we didn't exactly know until closer to her due date. And, fair warning, women are rarely ever due on their due date."

"That didn't answer my question," Kain replied, noting that the others were off either refilling their glasses or playing pool. "I mean, Vanessa is a lovely name. Which of you picked it out?"

"I did," He shifted now, leaning on his elbows against the table. "I remember the first time I ever met Becky's mom. She used to tell me

that Becky was her little butterfly; beautiful and fragile, but capable of such magnitudes of destruction...according to the mythos. Anyway, I thought that was fitting for her, but I couldn't very well name my daughter _butterfly_, it'd be weird." He smiled gently and leaned back again. "So I named her Vanessa."

Kain raised a brow, still confused. "What do butterflies have to do with the name Vanessa?"

"Vanessa translates to _butterfly_ in Ishvalan." He smirked, proud of himself. Mostly because Becky loved the name and never bothered to ask what it meant. "She's also the goddess of brotherhoods and unions. I mean, it made perfect sense to me. That way she's got a little bit of Becky and a little bit of me. Her middle name, Anne, means _favor from God_. Considering my...situation, it seemed like the cosmos thanking me." He shrugged and downed the shot of Whiskey. "I'm just saying. It doesn't have to make sense, but it's better if it does."

"Thanks...I'll keep that in mind. It's kind of ironic that her middle name is Anne, and your name means _Gift from God_." The younger man leaned back, folding his arms on the table. "But I see what you mean. I wonder what Sheska would think of the name _Abigail_ for a girl..."

"You have nine whole months to think about it. Why don't you guys come up with something that means something to you?" He tapped his glass again, smiling to his comrade. "Just a suggestion. I think I might go watch General Mustang get his ass handed to him at pool. You think on that for a while."

5. Cuss Jar

****Cuss Jar****

"Ama!"

Damn it, she caught me. Rebecca paused washing the dishes to turn to her child, smiling as angelically as she could. "Yes, Vanessa?"

"I heard!"

Shit. "You heard what?" Just a few seconds prior to the altercation, Rebecca had dropped a knife into the sudsy water and cut herself trying to find it, which elicited a curse from her lips. This prompted Vanessa to toddle over with a jar and wiggle it. On the side of it, in Jean's sloppy scrawl, was the words _Cuss Jar_. "You're hearing things."

"Am not! Pay!" She wiggled the jar again, change bouncing around loudly inside of it.

The idea was to get Becky to cut down on her cursing around the kid, but it hadn't gone as well as he'd hoped. The promise was that once she had enough money, she could do whatever she wanted with it. Assuming they taught her how to use money by then. With the rate Becky was going, she'd have a thousand dollars by the end of the day. She grumbled something about beating him with the jar as she slipped a few quarters into it. "You're getting annoying with that thing,

kid."

"You know if you would stop cursing all the time, she wouldn't have to do that." Jean grumbled, closing the fridge door behind him. "I'm just saying, it's not attractive anymore."

"Oh, for God sake. Shut the hell up, Jean. You talk too much sometimes." And there was that irritating sound again.
"Fuck."

"That's two," He snickered, watching Nessa walk over with the jar. Just for good measure, she wiggled it again until Becky relented and stuck a five dollar bill in it. "Man, she got you hard that time."

"You know, you're not so innocent yourself," Becky huffed, leaning against the counter. "I've heard you say your fair share of curses. Especially when one of us is hurt."

"The difference is I don't say it _loud enough _that she can _hear me_." He corrected, pouring a glass of milk for the toddler. "And besides, I'm a saint. I'm sure you've heard of saint Jean."

Becky turned back around, narrowing her eyes as she went back to her task of doing the dishes. "Bite me."

"Careful, I might just do it." He moved over to put the milk back and looked over his shoulder at Vanessa. "What are you saving up for anyway? Did you ever decide?"

"Shin." She answered matter of fact, dropping the plastic jar onto the table. "I go."

"The hell you will. You can't go alone." Realizing what he'd said, he looked up as his wife started laughing hysterically.
"_Damnit_!"

Becky leaned down and kissed his cheek. "Pay up."

6. Self Doubt

****Self Doubt****

February 23rd...a date he could never forget. How could he? It was quite possibly the most turbulent time of his entire life "and that included surviving being stabbed. Only four hours ago he was told that he'd be a father _a lot _sooner than expected. While he wanted to imagine maybe it was a mistake, there was no mistaking the fact that they brought his wife through those doors crying. He moved quickly to her side, taking her hand in his own, biting down on his lip.

The poor man was sure that he was in the wrong place. He loved his wife to death, the idea that he could have put her through such misery was almost painful. He felt every single wince, every movement, and every time she yelled. He hated that for her.

Still, unsure of everything and ready to give up, he heard his wife speaking to him. Her voice was quiet and breathless from everything

going on, but she managed to break through the other sounds in the hospital room. "She'll love you no matter what."

He nodded, laying his head against her hand. "I know, I'm just...scared, it's a lot to handle, you know? I want to be a good daddy to her, and I can't even walk."

"You will." She smiled and kissed his hand. "I'll teach you both."

"Is that before or after work?" He was only partially sarcastic with his reply. He knew how bad this must be for her, but she was tough and refused to give him the upper hand. she'd always been stubborn. And while she tried to play it off like she wasn't in pain, he knew better than to believe her. "Becky, I love you. So, so much."

"I know," She whispered, closing her eyes tightly to the oncoming wave of pain that overtook her. A few moments later, she was back to looking at him with those dark brown eyes, full of all the love in the world. "Just make sure you share it. I know how much you hate the idea."

"I just..." He sighed and lowered his head. "...I want to be perfect. I can't do much else right now, so that's the one thing I shouldn't get wrong, right? But I don't know what to feed her. I don't know when or how long. I don't know how long naps should be. Should I let her cry herself to sleep or no? Should I worry if she's quiet? Becky, I just don't know."

Becky reached out and lay a hand on his cheek gently, tugging him down to kiss his lips. "We'll be together on that one. I promise, you won't ever have to worry about it. You'll be a great daddy," She whispered, trying to remember to breathe. "Besides, it's hard to mess up a baby."

"You say that, but if anyone could pull it off, it's me." He sighed, hand tightly holding hers. "I'm scared, Becky. I'm terrified of messing up. I don't think I can do this."

"It's a little late to back out now, don't you think?" She frowned and lay her head against his arm. "Don't you bail on me now. I need you. We need you. Just...think of all things your daddy did for you. You admired him, so surely he did something right."

"Yeah, I guess so." He kissed her head and pushed some of her hair behind her ears. "You'll be a great mother. You did a great job with our furbaby."

"That..." She groaned and tried to re-position herself, to no avail. "That hardly counts as practice."

He moved a little closer and closed his eyes, laying his head against hers. "Becky. We'll do this together, right? You promise me?"

She nodded and smiled to him, though her smile was sheepish. He could tell her will was fading. The thought of everything was starting to overwhelm him. Before he could say anything to her, he could hear the nurses telling him he had to leave. He didn't want to, but he knew he was only in the way.

He was still sitting quietly in the waiting room when the nurse came to retrieve him. "Is she-"

"Mother and child are fine," she replied, smiling to him. "Would you like to meet her?"

He looked up, startled. "Her?"

"Yes, your daughter." The nurse held open the door for him. "Come, she's eager."

He wheeled himself into the room, half expecting to find Becky asleep, but instead she was sitting up, her knuckle just barely grazing the head poking out of the soft pink blanket. The image was one he'd never forget, despite feeling like his heart shattered into a million pieces. Here was this perfect, wonderful, beautiful little girl "and he didn't know the first thing about taking care of her. He brought himself next to the bed and smiled to his wife. "She's..."

"...beautiful. Do you want to hold her?"

He paused, hesitation in his voice, uncertainty in his motions. "Iâ€"won't hurt her?"

"Jean, hold her like this," Becky demonstrated how to hold her and smiled. "Keep her against your chest, you won't have to worry. And she likes the sound of your heartbeat. She also really likes the sound of your voice. It's comforting."

"How do you already know that?" He questioned, holding his arms out for her to place the infant into them. She was so tiny compared to him, almost as if she was a doll. The child was so still and quiet, he almost worried for a moment that she was dead. His azure eyes had tears in them as he looked down at his daughter. "She's perfect."

"She's her daddy's daughter." Becky smiled weakly. "She has your eyes. But she's like me, too. She sleeps when you talk to her. She loves your voice."

"Do you really think I can do this, Becky? I mean...I thought being a soldier was hard but this-"

She leaned over and kissed him mid sentence. "You'll be fine. You're my hero, so now you can be hers, too."

And just like that, all the fears and doubts washed away. They ebbed in the distance, just barely nagging him. He kissed his daughter's head and smiled to his wife. "Thank you, Becky."

7. Bare Feet

****Bare Feet****

He'd taken Vanessa to visit Gracia; a weekly thing now since she loved playing with Elysia. Despite the age difference, they got along wonderfully. Vanessa was sitting in his lap, tugging on his hair, laughing as he tried not to grimace each time she pulled. He only

barely noticed the thunder rumbling in the distance. He didn't bring a jacket for Vanessa; something Becky would surely kill him over later. At least she'd have a real reason to be angry for once. He tried to shield the child from the rain, but it wasn't working. "Nessa, are you cold?"

The child shook her head and looked up at the sky. "Adda."

"Yeah, it's raining. Ama would kill me if she knew I had you out here in this weather." He sheepishly smiled at his child, kissing her hair. "I'll get you home. I don't want you getting sick."

"Adda, no." When he stopped to see what she was on about, the child wiggled free of him and sat at his feet for a moment. She then pushed forward and stood up, holding her hands out. Her little palms opened and closed, enjoying the feeling of the rain. "Nice."

"Yeah, it is kind of nice, isn't it? Not so hot anymore." He smiled to his daughter. "You like the rain?"

She nodded and took her sandals off, finding the first puddle she could, stomping down in it. "Adda like?"

"Adda loves the rain," He watched her, not even caring that she was now barefoot and covered in mud. He didn't care that she would probably get sick. She was enjoying herself and he loved that. Her squeals of laughter kept him vigilant. "Like father, like daughter, I suppose."

"Adda. Play."

He shook his head, only to have her tug him forward until he came out of the chair, thumping onto the ground. "Nessa."

"Play. Adda likes rain. Play!"

"Maybe next time, kiddo. Come on. We have to go home. At least then you can play outside the house."

Several hours later, he was sitting on the porch with her curled up in his lap under a pink blanket. The two of them had fallen asleep listening to the rain, and he didn't even care that she was soaked to the gills. She was happy, and he was happy because she was.

8. Heroes

****Heroes****

The sun was shining and Becky wasted no opportunity finding a use for her dogs. While Fang was playing with Vanessa and keeping her company, she had her husband in the yard hanging the laundry. It was a good opportunity for him to stretch his leg muscles without falling, and she was nearby if anything changed. He still wavered sometimes, but she never let him hit the ground if she was close by. She yawned lazily and brought out the last basket of clothing belonging to the youngest of the family. "Hey, good looking. Come here often?"

"You know it," He remarked, smacking her bottom as she walked by.

"Damn, Becky, is it hot out here or is it just you?"

"That line didn't work the first six times and it won't work now." She turned her back to him and started to pin up Nessa's clothes a little further down the line. She smiled over the line at her daughter. "She's growing up so damn fast."

"It's scary. One minute she can barely walk, now she's running marathons. I dread the day she's old enough to date." He shivered and turned to Becky. "She's so tiny still. Is that normal?"

"She's _three_, Jean, not _thirty_." She answered, moving over to gently push him back down into his chair. Seeing the child occupied with the dog, she leaned down to kiss him quite passionately on the lips. "I want another."

"How does it feel to want?" He grinned.

She wanted to smack that grin right off his face. She hated when he did that when she was feeling this way. "Fine," she huffed and turned on her heel back to the porch. "But you get to suffer, Jean. Because soon enough, Nessa's going to be old enough to forget how cool you are."

He gave an expression that reminded her of a wounded dog. "She'd never..." As if on cue, Nessa tugged on his hand in the chair. "Yes, Nessa?"

"Adda hurt?"

He blinked a few times, trying to get the look of betrayal off his face. Looking down at his little girl he shook his head. "Adda's fine."

The little girl persisted, tugging on his hand again. "Adda, hurt." This time she said it with a little more authority, climbing onto his lap. When he hoisted her up, she lay her tiny little hands on the scars on his chest. How did he forget about those? This must have been the first time she'd ever seen him without a shirt. "See?"

"They're old," He nuzzled her hair. "I promise, I'm fine. Sometimes it aches, but it doesn't hurt anymore. It's a good ache."

"How?"

He froze. He'd never wanted to explain it to a toddler. How could he? The story itself was painful in it's own right, but now to tell it to his baby? His hands tensed on her back. "Nessa, I don't think you're old enough y-"

"How?" She inquired again.

He looked down, hair falling in his eyes. "Nessa..."

"Daddy's a hero," Becky finally said from the porch, putting out a pitcher and a few glasses. "Come up here, Ama will tell you."

"Becky, I don't think-

"It's fine, Jean. I can handle it." Patting her lap, the child obediently ran over and climbed up. "See, a long time ago, daddy was a soldier like mommy."

"Long?"

"Like, two whole days ago." Becky laughed at her daughter's surprised gasp. "Daddy's job was to protect the princess. See, he's like the knights in your books. Instead of running _away _from danger, he ran _towards _it. And he never ever, ever, second guessed it. Well one night, he was in the dark, and it was really hard to see. He was trying his best to keep the princess protected. See, she was scared of the dark." Becky embellished a bit and changed some of the names and ideas around so it would make sense in her daughter's world. "Well, out of nowhere, someone stabbed daddy with a sword."

Those wide blue eyes that focused on his was heartbreaking. He gasped for air. "Becky...stop."

"Daddy made it, though. You know he didn't die, because he's sitting right there. But, daddy had to stop being a knight...at least for a little while." She smiled a bit, kissing Nessa's nose.

He was already up on the porch, moving passed her. "It's been six years, Becky. I can't go back. If there was any hope, it's already passed. Please stop getting her hopes up." He responded bitterly before moving back into the house. He didn't move, he sat on the other side of the door with his head hung in shame. Now she knew...and he was terrified of how she'd think of him. _The day you stop being cool..._

"Adda..." Nessa dropped off of her mother's lap and ran to open the screen door, fighting with it for a few moments before successfully opening it. She ran around front of him and held out her hands. "Adda, pony."

"What, Nessa?" He hadn't meant to sound so mean. Especially not with her. That was a tone meant for Becky and Roy. "Sorry, baby...it's just...a hard memory."

"Adda, wook." She held out her hands, touching his on the arms of his chair. "Adda."

Becky stood on the other side of the door, watching her daughter gesture in a fit of rage because he wasn't understanding her. She smiled a bit. "She's trying to tell you that you're still a knight, you just have a different kind of pony now."

Vanessa nodded wildly, black curls bouncing as she did so. "Adda pony!"

He couldn't help it. The smile that crossed his lips was so wide he thought his cheeks would fall off. He'd always be her knight, wouldn't he? "Thanks, Vanessa...daddy needed that."

End
file.